



## ***St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)***

**Worship Address :** Cerritos High School Auditorium  
12500 E. 183<sup>rd</sup> St., Cerritos, CA 90703  
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

**Mailing Address :** 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701  
562-924-5051

**Website :** [www.sp-ecc.org](http://www.sp-ecc.org)

December 20, 2009

**Theme: Christmas Greatness**

**Text: Isaiah 11:1-2**

Isaiah probably began his career as a prophet sometime during the decade of 740 BC. When David and then Solomon had ruled Israel, Israel experienced what might be called a golden age. But those days had come and gone. Israel was now divided into two kingdoms: The kingdom of Israel in the North and the kingdom of Judah in the South. Isaiah prophesied that the kingdom of Judah would be conquered by the kingdom of Babylon. David's dynasty came to an end at that point. Since then that dynasty has not reemerged on the scene of world history.

In this prophecy, Isaiah is referring to Israel as the stump of a tree that had been cut down. Nothing remained but the stump. So it was with the kingdom of Judah. David's dynasty had been cut off. He still had descendents in the world, but none of them would ever sit on the throne of Israel again. Still, God speaks through Isaiah to say that even though Israel looked like a dead stump, a Branch would once again grow out of that stump to bear fruit. Isaiah was referring to an olive tree which was a symbol of Israel. If you cut off an olive tree to the ground so that only a stump remains, it will grow back again unless you dug up the roots. Isaiah used the image of the stump to portray Judah as being small, unimpressive, and powerless.

But this prophecy is not about weakness but about greatness. God's Spirit would rest upon this individual so that he would do great things for God. But before we go any further we need to get a handle on what greatness as far as Scripture is concerned. To put it in modern language, greatness means something like this: A person is on the way to becoming great when he removes himself from the center of his universe and puts Christ there. This takes great humility. It means that we admit that we can't live life on our own apart from Christ.

When we talk about being humble in order to become great, we begin to talk about God's version of greatness. When he revealed His greatness, he did it by sending His Son with whom He had shared his glory from eternity past to be born as a tender little baby in an unimportant town like Bethlehem—in a barn. When the people of this world think about greatness they tend to think in terms of wealth, power, fame, beauty, and so on. God's greatness comes in a different package. He Son of God humbled himself to be born as a powerless baby, in the unimportant town of Bethlehem. A peasant girl gave birth to Him and he was raised by unimportant parents in a nowhere town called Nazareth.

It is clear from Scripture that God's definition of greatness involves an attitude of humility. Throughout human history, God has often chosen insignificant people to do



***St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)***

**Worship Address :** Cerritos High School Auditorium  
12500 E. 183<sup>rd</sup> St., Cerritos, CA 90703  
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

**Mailing Address :** 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701  
562-924-5051

**Website :** [www.sp-ecc.org](http://www.sp-ecc.org)

great works for Him. Often he does not choose people from a list of those who are most likely to succeed. When he does choose a person from among the powerful and wealthy, that person must learn the lesson of humility in order to be truly great in God's sight. Christmas greatness means that people must humble themselves in order to be truly great.

That baby, who was born in Bethlehem grew to be a man. Isaiah will say that He had no majesty or beauty to attract people to Him. Except for His sinlessness, before His ministry began, Jesus would not have been someone who stood out in a crowd. He was not powerful or great as the world defines power or greatness. But he did possess a power of another kind. Isaiah has written that the Spirit of the Lord would rest upon Him. God's power through the Spirit would flow into him and through Him to bless people with His teaching, His exorcisms, and His healings.

Christmas greatness is an exciting thing. It is exciting because it tells us that God uses people who are not important or powerful by worldly standards. Christmas greatness tells us that this has been God's pattern down through the centuries. It is still His pattern today. Therefore, we may conclude that God can use us to do great things if we humble ourselves before God. Jesus said, "...whoever wants to be great among you must become your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." Jesus Himself set the example for us. He was the greatest servant ever in that he offered his sinless life for the sins of the world. He is therefore the greatest person in all of history by God's standards. That is the end result of Christmas greatness.